



ĀŠE‘AT AL-LAMA‘ĀT

ĀŠE‘AT AL-LAMA‘ĀT (The rays of the flashes), a detailed commentary by Nūr-al-dīn ‘Abd-al-Raḥmān Jāmī (817/1414-898/1492) on the *Lama‘āt* (The flashes) of the mystic poet Faḡr-al-dīn Ebrāhīm ‘Erāqī (610/1213-688/1289). The *Lama‘āt*, ‘Erāqī’s most important work, is a relatively short composition in twenty-eight chapters containing about 8,000 words of highly elaborate prose intermingled with verse and with many references to the Qur‘ān and to Arabic poetry and Sufi sayings. ‘Erāqī called his work the *Lama‘āt* in order to symbolize his attempt to express some “flashes” or “effulgences” imparted to him by the teachings of the great Andalusian mystic, Moḥyī-al-dīn b. al-‘Arabī (560/1165-638/1240), and particularly by his *Foṣūṣ al-ḥekam* (Bezels of wisdom) which ‘Erāqī had studied under Ebn al-‘Arabī’s eminent disciple, Ṣadr-al-dīn Moḥammad Qūnawī (d. 673/1274). But while ‘Erāqī was directly inspired by the ideas of *Foṣūṣ al-ḥekam*, his literary model was *Ketāb-esawāneḥ al-‘oṣṣāq* (The book of the flashes of ideas) of Aḥmad Ġazālī (d. ca. 520/1126), which he tends to imitate in style while remaining much more consistent in thought (Chittick and Wilson, *Divine Flashes*, pp. 4-5, 44-46). Thus, whereas the basic conceptions of Love (‘eṣq), Lover (‘āšeḡ), and Beloved (*ma‘šūq*) and their interrelations come from Ebn al-‘Arabī, the tendency to center exclusively on this subject and to mix prose with poetry in a rather aphoristic style comes from Aḥmad Ġazālī.

‘Erāqī divides his work into a short introduction and twenty-eight “flashes” (*lom‘a*) all converging on the analysis of Love in its various aspects and degrees. Even those *Lama‘āt* which seem to deviate from this theme (especially



those which lay more emphasis on the interrelations of the reality and the appearances of God) are basically endeavors to show that all appearances, as well as all existence, are but variant aspects of the ways Love manifests Itself to Itself in the forms of Lover and Beloved, while remaining the One and the Unique.

The clear pantheistic basis of the *Lama‘āt* and the unity of ‘Erāqī’s thought facilitate Jāmī’s task (at least from the intellectual point of view), who, like ‘Erāqī, was a fervent adherent to Ebn al-‘Arabī’s doctrine of monism (*wahdat al-wojūd*). So Jāmī’s task consists in bringing the effect of these “flashes” into full radiation, while trying his best not to interfere in the author’s thought and not to break the flow of his ideas. Still, he produces a new work of about 30,000 words in addition to ‘Erāqī’s text.

In the preface Jāmī tells us that he was first asked to edit the text and that after much hesitation he yielded to the insistence of his patron and friend, the famous minister, scholar, and poet, ‘Alī-Šīr Navā‘ī (q.v., 844/1441-906/1501). Jāmī’s hesitation was in part due to the fact that ‘Erāqī was strongly attacked by the conservative circles (*ahl-e taqlīd*) for his alleged heedlessness in the matters of love. Yet, once Jāmī occupied himself with the collation and edition of the text, he was attracted by the grace of its style, the richness of its allusions, and the depth of its symbolism intermingling human knowledge with superhuman gnosis.

Jāmī’s vast knowledge of Arabic and Persian, as well as of the Sufi tradition and the context of ‘Erāqī’s work, make his contribution essential. He worked from different manuscripts and had in some cases to correct most of them, especially when it came to Arabic. Yet his major contribution, namely his commentary, seems to have been imposed upon him by the fact that “manuscripts of the text differed, and some of them appeared to be perverted from the path of accuracy. In certain cases of concision and passages of difficulty, reference was made to the commentaries on it; but neither was any difficulty solved thereby, nor in any of them was any concise statement properly amplified. As a necessary consequence . . . to correct its sentences and elucidate its hints, a commentary should be compiled gleaned from the sayings of the elders of the Path and leaders in the Truth, especially those two great shaikhs Moḥyī-al-dīn Moḥammad b. al-‘Arabī and his disciple and pupil Ṣadr-al-dīn Moḥammad of Qonya and their followers” (Browne’s tr. of Jāmī’s preface to the *Aṣe‘āt*, see *Lit. Hist. Persia* III, pp. 445-47). This preface is followed by a long introduction (*tamhīd*) of about 3,500 words meant to



present the most important Sufi principles underlying ‘Erāqī’s text, thus containing the gist of both ‘Erāqī’s and Jāmī’s messages and constituting an independent addition to the text. After his *tamhīd*, Jāmī starts his running commentary and ends it with a chronogram in which the word *atmamtoho* (I finished it) gives the date 886/1481 (more probable than Browne’s “tammamtoho,” i.e., 885/1480-81, see op. cit., p. 447; cf. *Aṣḥ‘at*, Tehran, 1329/1911, Jāmī, p. 128; Pertsch, *Verzeichnis*, p. 239; Hekmat, p. 182).

Jāmī’s commentary is of high scholarly value and of great help to the reader. Its methodological approach is clearly discernible: to establish the text in its most correct form, then, after elucidating lexical, grammatical, syntactical and rhetorical difficulties as well as the basic Sufi terminology, to elaborate on the cryptic points, and to defend those which seem to need argumentation. Jāmī provides each “flash” with a long title summarizing the specific topic it discusses. He often defines ‘Erāqī’s terms as well as the difficult terms that occur in the commentary. He identifies the authors or sources of many citations in the text and translates the Arabic ones into Persian. In addition, his commentary includes a considerable amount of his own verse and of Sufi sayings, thus possessing some literary importance on its own. Jāmī’s deep poetic sense coupled with his erudition allow him to criticize ‘Erāqī whenever his verse is incompatible with the mystic idea he tries to illustrate. More frequently, however, he defends ‘Erāqī’s notions and sometimes tries to preempt possible refutations by raising questions and answering them. In arguing for a certain interpretation, he is flexible enough to bring in more than one interpretation, including plausible variants, and even contradictory ones, then to give the logical reason for his preference. In general, however, he follows a rather strict line of interpretation derived from his adherence to, and direct quotation from, Ebn al-‘Arabī and Ṣadr-al-dīn Qūnawī. By the time of Jāmī, at least six other commentaries on the *Lama‘āt* were available (Ṣafā, *Adabīyāt* III, pp. 1197-98; Nafīsī, *Naẓm o naṭr*, p. 164), but Jāmī’s commentary is the most informative of all and quite successful in explaining, often plausibly, many points which would otherwise seem too concise or too esoteric to be understood.



BIBLIOGRAPHY

Although published more than once in Iran (1303/1885 and 1329/1911) and in India, *Aše‘at al-lama‘āt* has not yet been critically edited.

There are many good manuscripts of the text; see, e.g., W. Pertsch, *Verzeichnis der persischen Handschriften*, Berlin, 1888, pp. 239-42 and Monzawī, *Nosk̄ahā* II, pp. 1032-33.

For further reference see “Aše‘at al-lama‘āt” in *Dāyerat-al-ma‘āref e fārsī* I, Tehran, 1345 Š./1966.

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